


The Incongruence of Internationalisation Policy in Japanese Higher Education: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Exploring how policymakers construct policy texts by recontextualising aspects of previous policies can provide evidence of whether a present internationalisation project in Japanese higher education provides a holistic understanding of the importance of deeper critical cultural awareness to support a comprehensive approach to internationalisation agendas. In some respects, these present policies are closely aligned to previous initiatives that were by design limited by narrow culturalist and socioeconomic conceptualisations of internationalisation. Applying the critical tools of discourse analysis will contribute to both a theoretical and practical interpretation of higher educational policy planning. This approach will provide both a historical and contextual relational analysis of policy texts to support a critical problematisation approach for interrogating policy in respects of socioeducational factors that support, or hinder, higher educational approaches to interculturality in Japanese higher education.

KEYWORDS

Critical Cultural Awareness, Critical Discourse Analysis, Internationalisation, Problematisation

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores in some detail, with particular emphasis over the past number of years, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (hereafter MEXT) policies that are responding to global higher educational orientations to external and internal internationalisation. These policies require MEXT—socioeducationally, and Japan—socioculturally, to consider the implications of adding more international and intranational dimensions to its higher educational curricula. At the same time, in some respects, these contemporary policies are closely aligned to previous initiatives that were by design limited by narrow culturalist conceptualisations of internationalisation (Liddicoat, 2007). Liddicoat (ibid.) further notes that policy texts are one representation of educational discourses about language and culture. In the process of analysing national-level policy, it is incumbent on researchers to consider how policy initiatives connect to broader sociocultural dimensions of the policy planning context.

Socioeducational Research

These multidimensional approaches relate to curriculum enactment, as a reinterpretation of one of the core principles of curriculum implementation, which explores and recognises the importance

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of core classroom-based agentic relationships that exist between teacher and students. Enactment within this socioeducational model according to Graves (2008, p153), identifies the classroom as being embedded in “specific, complex and overlapping cultural, social, educational and political contexts-termed socioeducational contexts”. This focus of wider societal influences on classroom practices supports the importance of investigating educational ‘problems’ in order to facilitate better learning experiences.

In this paper, a contemporary period of policy planning has been contextualised around how socioeducational change is contested: specifically, by critically analysing policy discourses in relationship to concepts of interculturality with a particular focus to how interculturality can contribute to a deeper understanding of critical cultural awareness (hereafter CCA). Piller (2010) discusses those who make culture relevant, to whom, in which context, and for which purposes? Cross-cultural and intercultural communication approaches both start from an assumption of difference and otherness. This is problematic and will be demonstrated in some of the Japanese governments policy approaches discussed in this paper. An inter-discourse communication approach, on the other hand, is part of a CCA approach as it sets aside *a priori* notions related to ideas of identity and investigates how concepts such as culture are constructed by policy agents (such as teachers and students) as relevant categories for ideological negotiation (Schollon and Schollon, 2001). This inter-discourse understanding of intercultural communication will be explored further in this discussion as it relates to CCA.

Exploring how policy texts are shaped by, and demonstrate, interdiscursive, intertextual and recontextualised connections to previous policies, will give a clearer indication of whether MEXT’s present conceptualisation of internationalisation provides a more coherent understanding of the importance of CCA. Interdiscursivity of a text amounts to analysis of the particular mix of genres, of discourses, and of styles upon which it draws, and of how different genres, discourses or styles are articulated (or ‘worked’) together in the text. Intertextuality and reported speech is the presence within a particular text of elements of other texts which may be related to (dialogued with, assumed, rejected, etc.) in various ways. Recontextualisation refers to ways in which (a) text or parts of (a) text are taken from their original setting or context and then used in different contexts. This article will construct an inter-discourse narrative of related policy directives by exploring connections within and across texts using these (meta) linguistic tools¹.

Discourse as Social Coherence

Delineating the parameters of the study is important, as Bacchi (2000) identifies, in order to understand how policy-as-discourse analysis can be constrained by simplistic category politics, and this can contribute to a limited under-theorisation of discourse. Bacchi (*ibid.*, p.52) argues, “Discourses then are not the direct product of intentional manipulation by a few key political actors, but neither are they trans-historical structures operating outside of human intervention”. Discourse is one key dimension of policy analysis but we need to carefully consider that which is included as discourse, and that which is not. According to Bacchi (*ibid.*), there are problems and dangers in taking an extreme relative position in respect to language and discourse as extreme relative positions undervalue and ultimately contribute to an under-theorisation of other factors such as:

- power
- beliefs, fantasies, values and desires
- institutions, rituals, routines
- material practices
- social relations (Harvey, 1996, p.74)

A Foucauldian perspective on discourse supported by Bacchi develops an understanding of the present through historical contingencies. Mills (2003) writes of Foucault’s discussion of discourse about the importance of exclusion:

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